

The Omen

Volume 54
Issue 1



To:

**The Hampshire College
community**

From:

The Omen



IN THIS ISSUE...

Anon Valentines:
pages 6-11

Other stuff, but not enough to split into
sections:
you can figure out what's where, do that work
yourself

Staff Box: (In order of appearance)

Ida: look, there wasn't a layout meeting because we're in a pandemic. If you wanna judge me for that and for laying this issue out after the 14th, first scan all these old Omens, fix the bork website, coordinate the reunion, take over my role as FundCom financial director and figure out how to navigate HampEngage and sort out this Queer Conf stuff on top of a full courseload. See how willing you are to do anything but eat ice cream mochi and try but fail to fall asleep after that.

Front Cover: Ida Kao
Back Cover: Ida Kao

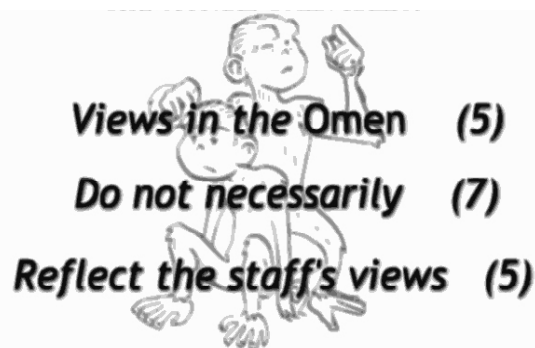
Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in any format (no PDFs please) by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, or email. Get your submissions to omen@hampshire.edu, the Omen Office or Ida's mailbox (1240)

Policy

The Omen is a bimonthly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straight-forward policy: **we publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous.** Send us your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insertion fanfiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry: we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your submission must include the name you use around campus: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. **Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of The Omen, the Omen editrix, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.**

Anyone can submit to the Omen, but you can also become Omen staff! Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for meetings, which usually takes place every Thursday night in the basement of A; the only permanent position is that of editrix. You should come and answer the staff question. We don't bite. You can find the Omen on every other Thursday in Saga, the post office, online at <http://expelallo.men>, and just about any other place we can find to put it.



EDITORIAL

Ida Kao

Life has been w i l d since I last wrote an editorial. Admittedly, there were only 2 issues published last semester, but even if I had published an issue during the last week I was on campus, literally none of this would have happened yet. I wish I had it in me to publish more that semester, but hopefully I've got the energy, and can gin up enough interest, to get enough content for more issues. What is the "this" that had happened between the last week of campus and Valentine's Day?

My smarmy answer is just: a lot. It's literally way more than I can keep track of, especially in my perpetual pandemic-induced brain fog. Being cooped up in your mod all the time really messes with your understanding of work vs. living/sleeping/eating spaces. But really the most important thing is the reunion! On the 20th! That you're not invited to as a current student, unless you were actively involved in it last semester. Which is just me and Finn, really. If you're an alum reading this and you were involved in The Omen as a student, and it's before 3:00 p.m. EST on February 20th, 2020 please contact omen@hampshire.edu to get the invite link and the staff box question! If it's after that, email me with your first and last name anyway; I've started a spreadsheet with names and contact information (emails, Twitter handles if applicable) and the next person to put on a reunion will be able to let you know!

The next is probably my usage of the Omen Twitter, @HampshireOmen. The Omen is not a newspaper nor a typical campus publication; I, as the one controlling the account (it even says as much in the bio) will refrain from treating the account as that of a normal, respectable, non-low-brow community rag. It's far more interesting. It's got memes, it's got pictures of random dead non-Omen Hampshire publications found in the archives, it's got questions, it's got general Hampshire-related stuff, it's got general publication/archives stuff! The Omen is a lil' campus publication, so I've got to support zines, the Internet Archive, SciHub, etc. Why every tweet put out by The Sophian or The Student

is just a summary of an article and a URL to the full article on their website is beyond me. I think it's more widely known amongst alums, since a lot of them have both the personal investment and some knowledge of its history, but I'm pretty sure anyone in the Hampshire community can recognize the Hampshire-ness of it. You can get plenty out of it, as long as you have at least a passing interest in Hampshire!

Oh, and of course, there are the interactions I've had on Twitter, via said Omen account. I would double what I've already written just talking about how great everyone has been. Once I'm sure the pdfs of issues are no longer indexed by search engines and therefore can't be found by fascist stalkers or employers who might not approve of the ignorant opinions of a then-college student who now knows better, I might talk in depth about them. It's mostly with alums who were involved in The Omen when they attended Hampshire, although there's been some interaction with other segments of Hampshire-affiliated persons. It's wild how much many of them still care, even with The Omen's checkered history. Really, it's just controversy after controversy, and in its earlier years, some straight up offensive shit that I'm certain the authors regret now. The many CRB hearings involving The Omen (so many, in fact, that the Hampedia page for the CRB mentioned its failure to shut down our beloved free speech publication) must've sucked to live through, but damn is it fascinating to read.

Did you know that The Omen is very, very cool? So cool, that alums who attended before the founding of The Omen want to be considered alums! Specifically the dude that wrote that memoir of his time as a student being an utter ass to everyone, Richard Rushfield. He was joking, apparently, but hey, that's pretty cool.

I doubt they'll read this far, but if they happen to poke around the Intranet or the bork site, and stumble across this, I sincerely apologize to two alums that, in their time at Hampshire, submitted to The Omen and were even friends with those who ran it, but had some seriously traumatic memories associated with it, including assholery from those who ran it. I was given their names and contact information from another alum who knew them, and was unaware that they most likely do not wish to be contacted about anything about The Omen, ever. I've created a "don't contact" list on the spreadsheet of

alum names/contact info, so they'll hopefully not have any more unpleasant reminders. I'm not going to name names because I don't need to direct more Omen-related attention their way.

Other than my goal to digitize the rest of the archives, (If you need any CEL-1 or CEL-2 credit, hit me up! Especially if you know JavaScript) there's nothing else major related specifically to The Omen. Submit, I guess, since it's hard to publicize and solicit submissions when I can't really walk around campus and talk to anyone. But I think that's a given. Oh, and the sheep are technically still leafsheep, but considering Hampshire's planning to go back to pre-pandemic academics next semester, I doubt they'll stay that way for long. I've honestly forgotten why I really did that; part of it was just an acknowledgment that the pandemic is creating far more disruption than anything else in Hampshire's relatively short history. And leafsheep are cute. But, still, I think there's another part to it? Whatever. As for Valentine's Day... get yourself to a grocery store in the coming days and buy some clearance candy for yourself, because you deserve to avoid full price.

SECTION VALENTINE

Sorry I made “Editrix” a thing, I was working some stuff out.

Omen Valentine



To:
The Omen

From:
FST

Thanks for using ur
PBS money 2 keep
Hampshire going.

ps big fan of ur slow zoom fx

Omen Valentine



To:

Ken "The Man,
The Legend,
The Haircut" Burns

From:

FST

**Roses are red
Violets are blue
Stop cursing on
my Christian
Minecraft server
Or I'm banning you**

Omen Valentine



**To:
Seriously pls stop**

From:

**My mom can hear
u guys**

**Violets are red
Roses are blue
I got this shit
backwards
Elbaveilebnu**

Omen Valentine



**To:
I'm dyslexic**

**From:
And colorblind**

**Roses are red
Violets are blue
Wake up sheeple
The government is
watching you**

Omen Valentine



**To:
The sheeple**

**From:
A concerned
citizen**

**Roses are red
Violets are blue
Wake up sheeple
The government is
watching you**

Omen Valentine



**To:
The sheeple**

**From:
A concerned
citizen**

*Section Other stuff, but not enough to
split into sections*

Submitted by Ida Kao, found in the Omen email draft folder, with
some personal info redacted

Dear Elisa-

The Omen doesn't negotiate with terrorists, and The Omen certainly doesn't take demands. The Omen makes demands. Send us \$220, and we will happily send you 20 copies of our magazine. In fact, for \$220, we will not send you 20 copies of The Omen. Otherwise, please expect 20 copies of The Omen.

You might have better luck contacting a literary magazine, rather than a free speech open submission publication. Consider The Reader (reader@hampshire.edu) or Quick Brown Fox (qbfeditorial@gmail.com) at Hampshire.

Best wishes,



Quoting Elisa Wouk Almino <elisa@nplusonemag.com>:

> Dear Editors of *The Omen*,
>
> I am writing on behalf of *n+1* magazine to ask if *The Omen* would be
> interested in organizing an event with our publication<<http://nplusonemag.com/>>
> .
>
> Three of our staff members, Carla Blumenkranz, Dayna Tortorici, and
> Elizabeth Gumport, will be doing a college tour March 20th - 27th and
would
> love to collaborate with the students of Hampshire College. We are open

to
> ideas, but in general we were thinking of hosting a reading and
discussion
> of *The Intellectual Situation *in our latest issue. Topics could range
> from the publication industry, can you make money off of writing?,
> political and culture writing, or anything you think is relevant to your
> publication and ours.
>
> Due to tour costs, we are demanding \$220 dollars from each college we
> visit. We are happy to provide you with twenty copies of the magazine in
> exchange.
>
> Likewise, if you are unfamiliar with our publication and would like us to
> send you a copy of the magazine, please do let us know.
>
> Do not hesitate to write me if you have any questions. We look forward to
> the prospect of organizing an event with you.
>
> We hope to meet you soon!
>
> Best wishes,
>
> Elisa
> *n+1 *magazine
> elisa@nplusonemag.com

Did someone try to scam me at Penn Station?: A filler story

By Ida Kao

Alright, there's like no content being submitted to The Omen so I'm gonna write this. I added in a bunch of irrelevant detail, because I feel crappy for only having like... 10 pages of content. I'm also procrastinating on my finals, partly because I'm hoping someday someone will be able to tell me if this was a scam or not.

So, I take the Amtrak to and from Springfield and Roanoke, Virginia to get to Hampshire and back to my permanent mailing address. This is only semi-relevant to the story, but again, I'm trying to add a bunch of words here, when getting back to Virginia I normally take an Uber from campus down to Springfield, feeling bad about exploiting whoever I'm driving with for the whole 45 minute ride and therefore always leaving a big tip; it's quite a drive, and the day I was set to leave, December 5, it was raining heavily and no Ubers were available until 40 minutes before my train was set to leave. Alas, when I finally got the driver who was able to pick me up, it would take 20 minutes to arrive, so it was too late to get there even if the driver sped. So I missed it, and after calling CSS, who gave me a number to call, which had a person on the other end who talked to the Dean of Students, I received permission to stay past the noon deadline to leave and had to push my ticket back to the 6th, get an Uber to a hotel in Springfield, and walk to the Amtrak station in the morning with my suitcase ready to pull my arm out of my socket and go to the ticket counter because the voucher I had couldn't be used over the phone. Needless to say, after waking up early the day before and the rather pushy person behind me in line who kept trying to talk to the customer service agent even though he was trying to help me use the voucher I had to pay for my ticket, I was exhausted and after asking for help from the person on the elevator up to the platform to make sure I was headed to the right train, took a nap on Amtrak's wide, comfy seats, nearly missing my stop at Penn Station.

Layover was about an hour and a half so I wandered around looking at the storefronts before settling on some random mozzarella sandwich with a tiny, rubbery pickle and some chips. Not being familiar with the place, I decided to just settle against a pillar, the ones that are smack dab in the middle of the walkway and split the area in two. This particular pillar was huge and had an elevator embedded in it, so I could lean all of my luggage and myself against it comfortably. As I squatted with my mask off, munching on my mediocre, overpriced food, someone walked up to me. I'm just going to assume pronouns and ethnicity, because outside of Hampshire people are less accepting and therefore assumptions about gender and race can be made. This dude was clearly Latino, and I could have sworn I heard him say something about being Dominican. No mask, which I didn't pick up on until I thought back on this incident. His hair was messy, his teeth were yellow and crooked, and I didn't notice until later, but he wasn't wearing a mask. I don't remember much about his clothes, other than that he did have some layers on. Were they worn and holey? Were there signs of his class that sent off the alarm bells in my mind? I don't remember that, just his face, and that I didn't understand how someone could lack the social awareness to approach someone like me. Anyway, I've been told by my high school science teacher that eating is associated with having your guard down because you don't eat if you think you're in danger. I was also exhausted with the changes to my travel plans

and stressed by the 20+ pages of writing I had to do and my final exam this coming Tuesday. So I was probably an easy mark who had never seen a suspicious character in her life, in this guy's eyes.

He came up to me talking in Spanish and possibly saying something about me talking in English, but after putting his hand on his chest and saying that he was a good guy and my visible confusion as he jabbered at me in two different languages, he asked "Espanol or English?" and I said English.

Perhaps because of the stress, perhaps because I was just so tired and thrown off guard by the two languages, I don't remember what exactly was said. I do remember thinking right away that it was odd for this guy to approach me. What would make him think I knew Spanish? Why approach someone who was clearly traveling and had no clue how Penn Station might operate, sitting there eating? But again, I try not to be suspicious of others based just on appearances, and sometimes people just turn to random bystanders who look friendly and like they have the time to help, even if they're not the most competent.

In short (contrary to what I wanted to do in writing this out), this guy said his home was in Georgia and his luggage got stolen. He had told the police about it, and pointed somewhere to my left, presumably where the security was. His ticket was gone too, probably taken along with his luggage. His English wasn't great so his grammar was a bit odd and his accent was strong, but that was the gist of what he was saying. He pointed at his phone while he was talking, which was also confusing considering Amtrak emailed me my ticket and he could pull it up on his phone so long as he had the reservation number. Perhaps he was trying to use the NJ Transit or board a flight? Then why would he be over near the Amtrak gates? Was his phone dead? Is that why he pointed at it?

He then pulled out some money. I wasn't clear what he was saying but at some point I saw a woman in a safety vest and a million lanyards walked by, clearly some kind of transportation worker. I pointed at her, telling him that she could probably help him more than I can. He quickly said no, and from what I understood he wanted me to buy something using his wad of crumpled bills. I think he was asking me to buy a ticket for him? He said something about "only \$11" which an Amtrak ticket never costs when going that far south, especially for a ticket the same or next day. I had just paid over \$100 for my ticket when pushing it back a day. Was he offering me \$11 to buy it for him? Amtrak, and probably all the other transportation services in Penn Station weren't taking cash. As he thumbed through the cash, something inside my head clicked. "Ooooooh nooo if he wants me to buy something for him somehow this is gonna bite me in the ass." Out loud I said "this is a scam" and became a broken record, repeating "Please go away." He seemed a little upset, but not as much as I would be if I was truly trying to get help, but some people don't show that much emotion so who knows what his emotions really were. He also said something about me not understanding him because I didn't speak Spanish. He clearly meant it as an insult. I'm clearly not from a Spanish speaking country. Why on earth would I speak Spanish unless I took it in high school? And even then my Spanish would suck. I just kept saying "Please go away," and eventually he did. Needless to say, I was left unsettled and unsure of what the hell just happened.

After that I packed up what left of my sandwich and looked for a more traffic heavy

area to avoid getting cornered like that again. I ended up leaning against the glass walls of an escalator going down. Someone came up to me and asked me if I had any change. He was white and it didn't feel like panhandling, but he seemed unkempt enough to be homeless. (Is it judgmental of me to say that? I harbor no ill will towards the homeless.) Nonetheless, I was hypervigilant at this point and knew I didn't have any cash on me so I told him no. Of course, my feet were hurting and I was still a bit hungry, so I went up to an agent at a desk with the Amtrak logo and asked if I could sit down. The agent flatly told me I could if I had a ticket. I took mine out and said I wasn't sure which gate it was at. He asked for my ticket and looked it up on his computer, saying that mine wouldn't be here for a while. I asked if I could still go and sit, and he said I could if I had a ticket. Still in a monotone. I wasn't sure why he couldn't just say "yes" or "it's for all Amtrak passengers" or something. Confused and frustrated by this unnecessarily drawn out conversation, I walked inside and maneuvered my suitcase near my seat, unsure if the one at the desk was who I needed to show the ticket to.

You might think that everything has been relatively peaceful since then. Ha, no. Leaving Penn Station was fine, but I was still exhausted. I once again settled into a wide seat, tossing my luggage on the seat next to me, pulled out my toilet seat shaped neck pillow, and went back to snoozing. The train pulled into Union Station, the one in DC that's more shopping mall than it is transportation hub. My half-conscious brain heard something about some kind of maintenance being done and the electricity being turned off, which I knew happened fairly frequently when this train stopped in DC, although I had only seen it happen when traveling to Springfield, and the train stopped here before noon. Now it was 3:00 p.m. and the cumulative hours spent awake meant I couldn't bother to pay more attention. It wasn't until I looked up at a passenger walking by and she kindly told me that everyone had to get off. She was carrying her luggage, and in my dazed state I figured I might as well pack everything up and bring it with me just in case we weren't returning to the same vehicle. Wrangling my suitcase as it tipped to the side and forced me to stop and right it, I saw someone my own age stop at a pole, one that held up the canopy that sheltered those waiting on the platform from the rain. It wasn't until I walked up to her that her reason for stopping was revealed. Again, the exact words are a blur, but she needed someone to hang onto in the confusion. Did she have the same surrealist day I was having? I will never know that, only that she was asking me what was happening. She was and still is, since she's probably-- hopefully, alive, somewhere in Virginia, and not six feet underground because of the pandemic.

So, I tell this new person that I guess we should go up the escalator like everyone else and see what we can do. I asked her a few questions about whether she knew what was happening, and newsflash: she didn't. After exiting the waiting rooms with seats to the proper... not-fully-a-station part of Union Station, the part with the restaurants and the long rows of seats and the screens telling you when and where your train is going to show up. After going up to the big screen at eye level, and semi-talking to my new companion, semi-talking out loud, I eventually figured that we were still going back to the train we had just left. With that settled, we sat down on the chairs, about two seats apart. A few awkward minutes of shuffling my stuff around to

make sure nothing was going to fall over and spill open later, I attempted to make small talk. In an order I don't remember, I asked her what her name was (Christina; I offered up mine after she answered), if she'd been to Union Station often (no; I told her the food here was pretty good, and considered suggesting we both grab something to eat together, but decided against it), and where she was headed (Manassas; I told her I was going to the end of the line). Eventually I ran out of stuff to ask and tried texting whoever I could get to respond.

There were some really boring parts, huh? It's not one of those stories that make you think and everyone comes away with a different interpretation. Not even a moral for a simpler parable. Maybe there would be one when I was with Christina, finding something to keep me grounded, but I don't think I needed to get bogged down in the minutiae of every little thing that happened, especially since I didn't know what order they were in. Most of that was totally irrelevant to the narrative. Well, I just needed to take up space, and hopefully get some answers, if someone with more understanding of urban living actually manages to get through this. (Seriously, they deserve a medal just for that. This whole thing was written half asleep, I have no clue if it's any good.) It was just me trying not to be too weird and awkward around the people who were also just trying to get somewhere, and possibly getting taken advantage of until I shut that person down. And really, isn't that some kind of moral? Life sucks. Life is boring. When life is punctuated by the interesting (in retrospect) and exciting and/or scary stuff, it's interspersed with a whole lot of really boring everyday shit, and you and I have just gotta put up with it. And while I understand the importance of narrative, because it just gets long and useless when you include the boring awkwardness, isn't there something lost there? Even if they're not good stories, isn't a story that tries to paint the most complete picture the most accurate one? And why is the more accurate one the less interesting one than the streamlined, only-include-what-you-need story? I certainly don't know the answer, and I'm kind of annoyed that that's the case.

I'm still trying to figure out what this guy was trying to get me to do. Maybe take the cash and buy a ticket using a credit card? Was the cash counterfeit? Was he going to pretend the ticket was only \$11 and plead with me to pay the difference when it totaled a lot more? He couldn't steal my shoes, but he could probably make off with my luggage while I was distracted at the counter trying to pay. Or maybe I pegged this guy all wrong and he really was trying to get home to Georgia and for some bizarre reason couldn't ask someone who actually worked there to help him. I don't know, but it was suspicious enough that I don't feel all that bad; surely he would know that approaching someone young and traveling is odd, and if he didn't know that, he does now. Even in my half-asleep stupor, I think I've learned to be more suspicious of people, especially if they're maskless and planning on giving me an object with who-knows-what germs on them during a literal pandemic. Or something like that.

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omen@hampshire.edu